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A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

and a warning against the deception in the last days
foretold by Christ

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At the Table of the Lord

“DISCRETION SHALL PRESERVE THEE . . .”

IN our daily readings, we are again giving attention to the words of Solomon, really the words of the Spirit, preserved to help us grow in wisdom and understanding. The Father looks to His children as He says: “My son”—revealing great love and care.

Keeping this in mind, let us look at our portion for today which begins:

“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; . . . Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1-5.

A knowledge of God! Isn't this what we are searching for — a greater awareness, an increased perception of God and His ways, so that we can more fully please Him? The result of this growing in knowledge, understanding and wisdom is shown to us:

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:” Verses 10, 11.

It is our hope to be preserved—or hedged about and protected. The promise that understanding will keep us tells us that there will develop within an attitude of observing and watching in the desire to know and do that which pleases the Almighty. How we do want to be preserved and kept. Discretion and understanding make these hopes possible. The word *discretion* comes from a root meaning to plan, so that this verse might be read: “A plan shall preserve thee.” Does not God have a plan which He discloses through His word so that we can grow as His sons—aware of His plan and seeking to fit into it? As His wisdom enters our hearts, and knowledge does become pleasing to us, this plan becomes ever more clear. It may be asked, What is this plan? If we can discern it, make it real in our minds, we grow in hope which sustains. The essence of His plan is found throughout His word. It reveals God's purpose to take out a people for Himself through His Son, and to place them in His kingdom as kings and priests. In each of our recent portions, we are allowed to see His purpose, and by this means, we may be helped to draw near as His sons and daughters, and to experience His blessings. This is possible only as our living conforms to His purpose.

More help in our desire to grow in wisdom and knowledge is found in Numbers. Moses was instructed by the Almighty:

“Take ye the sum of all the congregation ... the number of their names, ...”
Numbers 1:2.

Israel was numbered at Sinai, and there were found to be 603,550 men (verse 46) who were twenty years old and upward. It is also interesting to note that when Israel was again numbered forty years later, just prior to entering the land, there were 601,730 who were twenty years old and upward. All those who had been numbered earlier at Mount Sinai were gone, having died in the wilderness, except for Caleb and Joshua. Why had they perished without entering the land? They had refused to hear God's instructions at Kadesh-Barnea. They did not give heed, for there was greater fear of the giants in the land than of God. The consequences for those who had been numbered at Sinai were drastic; all died in the wilderness because of unbelief. Yet 601,730 *did* enter into their inheritance. God's plan, His purpose did not stop. How important it is, Brethren and Sisters, that we discern this pattern, strive to conform to His plan, make it ours, and know the certainty that only by it we may be preserved. His divine arrangements can be found only in His word — not in education, secular research, scientific developments, high-sounding philosophical theories, or any other source, no matter how impressive it may seem. It is only when *His* wisdom, *His* counsel enters the heart and the knowledge of Him becomes pleasant to the soul, that there is a hope of being preserved and kept as He has revealed to His children.

Why did God require that Israel be numbered? He, after all, was their strength! Indeed when David numbered Israel he suffered for it, having forgotten that God was Israel's strength. Why then did the Almighty require His people to be numbered at Sinai? Perhaps the meaning helps. To *number* means to visit, to give a charge, to oversee. Was not their numbering then a visitation by their Lord, to give a charge and a responsibility—a work, showing that they were His, a part of His plan? Aaron and his sons were numbered and assigned a work. When the cloud went up, the camp of Israel and the tabernacle were to move on accordingly. Aaron and his sons had the responsibility of covering the holy things. The Levites by their families were then assigned a specific work in moving the tabernacle. There would be no confusion, no milling about when the cloud went up. Each would pick up his assigned work, and the tabernacle would be ready to move, to follow the pillar of cloud or fire. God in this way visited them, giving a charge. So the numbering was a vital and necessary part of His orderly plan. The same was true for the rest of Israel. They were assigned their places by

tribes as they camped about the tabernacle. When the cloud so indicated, they marched as divinely appointed. Every brother and sister in Israel had his specific place indicated by God; in the midst of the camp stood the tabernacle with the presence of God clearly seen over it. How impressive as one looked upon this great camp! Balaam was one who did this:

“... He saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes ... and said, ... How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.”

Numbers 24:2-6.

“According to their tribes ...” — exactly as assigned, as visited by the Almighty. Indeed how goodly, precious, and well favored their tents appeared under the wisdom of God's plan. How significant was God's requirement that Israel be numbered. Those faithful and perceptive would see this. Here also is a help for us, Brethren and Sisters, as we strive to conform, privileged to be numbered as His. This is possible only as we know His purpose and allow it to enter our hearts. As we strive to allow it to govern our living, it is indeed a means of hedging us about, preserving and keeping, as He has promised.

As we desire to make this purpose of God a guide for our living, the Apostle Paul reveals an essential aspect to help. He wrote:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” I Corinthians 13:1.

All words—impressive as they may seem, inspired as they may sound—are empty, artificial, and without value unless spoken in love for God and for brethren and sisters. Paul continued:

“... Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.” Verse 2.

We may feel to be doing wonderful things, removing great obstacles in the way; we may appear to exhibit extensive and impressive knowledge. But unless these things are directed by love and used to help us conform to God's desires, we are as

nothing—of no value to Him. We have the example of Solomon. His wisdom and understanding were beyond that known by any in his time. However, as his love for God, for God's purpose waned, overcome by desire and ambition, he lost his discretion and so became as nothing—all because that vital ingredient, love for God, was missing. Paul goes on:

“... Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” Verse 3.

Deeds showing what is called charity, or love—such as giving all to the poor, acts of great sacrifice involving hurt to self — if motivated by something other than love for God are of no advantage or profit. They do not embrace or honor God's plan, but rather, may be done for esteem, for appearance, or for other forms of self-gratification. We must ask ourselves, as we carry on with lives that are busy and with time that is full: Why am I doing this? To please our Father, to grow in His plan — thus showing love for Him and His? Or, am I doing it because it is the expected thing, or because it puts me in a good light with my neighbours, or my associates—in business or society? Or, am I doing it because it pleases myself and gives me enjoyment or a lift? If it is because of love for God, for His Son, and for our brethren and sisters, how pleasing to Him—revealing a growth in discretion, in the ability to plan “with God”.

The Apostle goes further to help us, writing of an all-encompassing responsibility:

“... Let all things be done unto edifying.” I Cor. 14:26. What is *edifying*? The word means to build an house. How well this stirs us to plan “with God”. For His purpose is to build a house upon the foundation of His Son. Such a house was foreshadowed in the tabernacle and temple, built by Moses and Solomon, in accordance with His pattern. Neither of these men were permitted to add to these divinely-given patterns, nor take from them. In them God's purpose with His people was revealed, concerning a house, a high priest, a throne, a kingdom, and a land — all promised, all laid out from the beginning — to give hope, wisdom, and understanding—to preserve and to keep. How does this apply to ourselves, Brethren and Sisters? It exhorts us to work to enhance His edifice, to support His plan, to bind together, encouraging a unity—a mutual working in love to honor and obey Him. This is the charge to all who are so privileged as to be numbered, visited, and counted as His Israel.

As we have been helped to discern the message in his word, His plan is seen unfolding — enfolding us unto it, if we will through love bring our living into conformance. This was the struggle also of the Lord Jesus. He was able to be the Victor in that life-long effort, through love for His Father so simply expressed: "... Not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42).

Let us renew our resolve to follow Him—reminded, helped, and encouraged by these words of our Father which we have considered:

"My son ... when wisdom entereth into thine heart ...
discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep
thee:"

Proverbs 2:1-11.

J.A.DeF.



Mercy and Truth

WE are helped once again by the God inspired words of Solomon as we consider our portion in Proverbs. In the 16th chapter the 6th verse we are told:

“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged ...”

A casual reflection upon these words provides us with a basic understanding of God’s mercy and truth and the basic knowledge by which we can hope to overcome and to attain unto the end of God’s purpose. However, the fact that the combination of mercy and truth is used both by Solomon as well as David in many instances, respectively in the Proverbs and the Psalms, prompts us to consider more carefully the practical meaning for ourselves.

In returning to the original meaning of the word mercy, we find that it means kindness, and comes from a prime root meaning to bow. The word truth means stability, coming from a prime root meaning to build up or to support. Our verse could then be paraphrased: “By God’s bowing down (mercy) and by His building up (truth) is iniquity purged.” This speaks of God’s mercy and truth but also speaks of the reaction of His people as they are to use that mercy and truth.

We find additional help from another reference where mercy and truth are mentioned together in Proverbs 14:22:

“Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.”

To devise good is more than the surface application of how we might view goodness. For, as His mercy and trust is received and valued—further such devising requires thought, reflection and a seeking to apply mercy and truth in a consistent manner with His greater plan. We need to be circumspect when good is done to one who might be in need, as there is a striving to help another to be built up in the household of God. To do this we must put ourselves in another’s shoes—the good done is a help only if it is in line with God’s mercy and truth.

Solomon further reminds us in Proverbs 3:1-4:

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”

These words give critical focus to the consideration that we are not to forsake mercy and truth. What is important to discern is

that mercy and truth can be forgotten, if we are not applying them in our daily living. Solomon's words say to bind them about the neck and write them upon the table of our heart. How is this done? By keeping always in mind the mercy and truth extended to us by God.

More help on this subject is given as we go back to our verse in Proverbs 16:6:

“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the *fear of the LORD* men depart from evil”.

The fear of the Lord is tied into this thought of keeping mercy and truth. The fear of doing anything which would displease God can help one move to think differently during his time of probation. This characteristic has been a hallmark in all who have sought God. They had a fear that God would forsake them and thus they would lose His mercy and truth. David recognized this need not to forsake the Giver of mercy and truth as we read in Psalm 25:10:

“All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

David must have instilled this thought in his son Solomon who initially sought God's covenant and walked in God's paths when he asked to have wisdom so that he might apply mercy and truth as he judged Israel. We can see how important it is that mercy and truth always be valued so that they are not lost, as they ultimately were to Solomon.

As David fled from Saul, he prayed not to be destroyed and we see the trust he placed in God as he said in Psalm 57:1-3, which is entitled: “To the chief Musician (Victor) Altaschith Michtam (I pray do not destroy the pure gold-like faith) of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.”

“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.”

As he was pursued by Saul and must have known great fear for his life, where did he put his confidence? In God. He knew God would save him as he said “Selah” which means value it considering the end. David was looking to the end of God's purpose when release would come from all persecution and fleshly fear. God does send from heaven His mercy and truth to

those who seek it through His help. We can be strengthened in our trials and tests only as we call upon Him for help as David's example in Psalm 61:6-7 tells us:

“Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations.

He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.”

Here mercy and truth are tied to the thought of preservation, which David recognized he needed even as king. How did David call upon God for mercy and truth? By thinking of his past experiences and trials, remembering how he had sorely needed God's strength and help and how it had been provided. His desire was to seek after it and this kept him in favour with God.

“But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.”

“Turn unto me, and have mercy”, — if this is our desire, we can be helped as we know David was on many occasions. He failed at times and came to realize the same mercy and truth was there to forgive and lift him up and help him be at one again with God.

This mercy and truth we are to think upon then is more than a reception of God's love, it is the application and reflection of these traits in us that can help us “depart from evil”. If we allow God's mercy and truth to permeate our living, causing us to bow down and look to God to stabilize and build us up, we can be helped in many ways as the 7th verse of Proverbs 16 goes on to say:

“When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

We need to be at peace with our enemies, both those who surround us in our everyday life, as well as the greater one within our flesh. Only as mercy and truth are valued and used in our living can there be peace within us now, with the hope of this peace eternally.

M.C.S.

Not Forsaken

Israel's lament that they were in an impossible situation affords us a considerable lesson:-

“And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”

(Numbers 14:2-4).

They had been brought out of Egypt with a very great deliverance, and now they wanted to give up the wonderful calling to which they had been called. The recording of this event is here to help us. Many difficulties may press upon us, one difficulty following another. But God never places us in an impossible situation, just as Israel of old were not placed in difficulties that they could not have overcome. It is really a matter of faith. Israel however were faithless; but how much worse off they were when they determined, as they thought, to flee from their difficulties. They would have a new leader they thought, and return to Egypt.

What a foolish and hopeless idea. Egypt could not provide anything better for them than what it could before they came out from the desperate unhappy circumstances they had been in there. But now, by hard heartedness they had also lost what they had failed to properly appreciate.

“Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him I will bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”

(Numbers 14:22-24).

Caleb had another spirit, what a blessed position to be in— it is an exhortation to us not to give up, but rather continue in hope, though “the days in the wilderness” may seem long and arduous. Caleb had to endure for forty years the hardships of

the way. But his enduring was not in vain, as the scripture illustrates. Caleb refused to be joined with the faithless actions of his brethren. In this he responded to the way of wisdom which we can read about as follows:-

“Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding”.
(Proverbs 9:6).

When Caleb eventually entered the land, how glad he would feel that he had stood firm in that trial of his faith all those years before. Caleb was one of those who responded to God’s provision, as shown in verses 9-12:-

“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser:
teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the
knowledge of the holy is understanding.
For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of
thy life shall be increased.
If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if
thou scornest thou alone shalt bear it.”

The scorners died, so therefore did not receive the wonderful blessing God had provided for His people. But on the other hand, the two who finished the journey undoubtedly had their days multiplied for the future blessing. This was an earnest of what is in store for those who do not forsake the way of wisdom. Those who do not give up will undoubtedly have their days multiplied and their lives increased in the new age, that blessing which cannot fail to those who continue to the end.

A similar theme and exhortation is also seen in the New Testament.

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.”
(2 Corinthians 4:1).

The Apostle did not faint, did not collapse from the work to give it up. Yet he had never had it easy as we see in verse 8:-

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.”

When the Apostle said he was troubled on every side, yet not distressed, he was not commending himself as a superman. Of course, he felt the distress of circumstances; but never to give up. If he was troubled, as he says he was, then he must have felt the trouble. He was perplexed. Can we not be also in the same strait? The thing is that he did not allow himself to be in despair over his many problems; for he believed in God, who knew the difficulties, and who in God’s own good time could help to the

uttermost and resolve the situation. The Apostle's expression of what he was enduring is shown as follows in verse 9:-

“Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”

The Apostle Paul was not complaining. Rather was he expressing his testimony of the help he was receiving in the difficulties. Persecuted—but not forsaken. In other words he believed he was being helped as certain things happened to deliver him from the persecution. His faith told him that this was the divine hand, working to help him. Cast down—but not destroyed. Oh yes! the Apostle was not immune to feeling cast down. But he knew, and had experienced, that when he was cast down God would lift him up again out of the distress.

Let us then consider our own position in these times. Some of us have experienced persecution and other distresses. Where did the help come from? Perhaps there was tangible provision in the need. But as we consider this subject, do we not see fundamentally that help, comfort, assurance and deliverance comes and came from God, whose hand worked to help (and help greatly) in difficulty and need. It is of His great kindness so that there is no giving up, so that our testing is not greater than we can cope with.

When Israel gave up, of old, it was because they failed to remember or perceive all the great help they had received. This then led them to speak of going back to Egypt, and to the evil impossible situation therein. How foolish not to remember what God had done, and have faith to believe what God would yet do for them.

The kindness of God to all who are His own is expressed by the Apostle in verse 15:-

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.”

We are not super-individuals, just as the Apostle Paul was not either and others before him, including Caleb. Yet if we do not forget what God has done for us we can be helped to rise above our difficulties; to fulfil in our own attitude what is testified by the Spirit through the Apostle:-

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”
(2 Cor. 4:16-17).

A Bible Class

“THAT I MAY KNOW HIM”

Philippians 3:10

Paul in Philippians chapter 3 is speaking to his brethren in Philippi, explaining to them his position in the sight of God — a position in which the hope of salvation was possible not only to him but likewise to them as well. He confirms his background as a Hebrew from the tribe of Benjamin and a Pharisee under the law, who persecuted with zeal the church of Christ. He further relates how he had to make his past living conform to the new standards shown to him by the example of Jesus Christ. He says in verses 7 and 8 of this chapter:

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”

Paul counted as loss all things which were of necessity to be given up in exchange for the knowledge and need to conform to the Truth. All those things once of great value to him were counted as worthless now that he “might win Christ”.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (Phil. 3:10-11).

Paul’s desire was, “That I may know him” ... these words “to know” quoted here mean to be aware of, to be sure, perceive or understand so as verse 14 further relates it is possible to:

“press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul realized that each day of his life he must value the mark or the example made by the Lord Jesus, in order to follow after Him.

The importance of striving to know Him is further emphasized in John 17:3 as the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself and His purpose in God’s plan.

“And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Paul in his desire for eternal life recognized the need to be closer to this ideal as set forth by the Lord Jesus, he wanted to

truly “know” Him. Those who like Paul are called by this knowledge of God are to be separate from the world and the influences of the flesh. Paul was using himself as an example to the Philippians illustrating how one called from the world must conform his background, his living, to the ideals set forth by the Lord Jesus.

This same thought of knowing Christ is also stated by John in I John 5:20:

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

and also in I John 4:7-8:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God. He that loveth not *knoweth not* God; for God is love.”

How can one know God and His Son Jesus? To know Him is to reflect this same love in one’s own living and to one another. Out of love God provided His only Son as an offering for sin, and in that same love Jesus submitted His living in obedience to become the perfect sacrifice.

Seen in these few words of Paul is a summary of what life in the Truth should be. Having been granted a knowledge of Christ’s perfection and His love for His Father, the requirement is to struggle to reflect that same spirit in one’s living. No one can ever fully “know” Jesus, but there can be growth in perception as one dedicates his living, time and strength to conforming his ways to His example. Paul had pressed toward the mark of knowing Him for thirty years and was still learning, making this his life’s work. It must be the life’s work of all, who mindful of the Lord Jesus’ example, struggle to know Him and attain unto the hope of resurrection.

M.C.S.

The Law of the Lord

David says in Psalm 19:7-9:-

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

Yes, the law of the Lord is perfect and the commandment of the Lord is pure. This shows a divine principle that there must be purity before real peace can be attained unto, for the world at large will only know peace when it has been purified by the judgment of the Prince of Peace, who will be as a refiner's fire and fuller's soap before He speaks peace to the nations, and the individual application of the principle in that which concerns us at the present moment, i.e. purity before glorification — purity must precede glorification, for it is written regarding the Holy City, “There shall not enter therein anything that defileth.” and the list of excluded persons include drunkards, revilers, (I Corinthians 6:9-11) showing without question that righteousness of a very high order is required to secure approval at the judgment seat. A continuance in sin in any form is fatal to our prospects in that day when every man will stand revealed in the presence of men and angels. This no doubt is the lesson which the Apostle would have us learn in 1 Cor. 6, but it is interesting to note what he says in the previous chapter where he says why the law which was perfect was given—“The law entered that sin might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” This rather strange statement at first sight yields some beautiful ideas when closely considered, as in the case of all scriptural things. Does not Paul say, “I had not known sin but by the law.” This is true, for sin is the transgression of the law and where there is no law there is no transgression.

A short-sighted view says — The more is the pity then that there ever was a law to transgress—away with the law, says this philosophy and we shall get rid of the sin and all its consequences. But would it? How would it apply in our day? If there were no law in England no one could commit crime, for it is the breaking of the law that constitutes crime and brings one into the hands of the police. Shall we say then, Away with the law—abolish the law that we may get rid of crime and so save many a one from the pains and penalties resulting? This surely would be folly of

the greatest degree of those who in their presumption, criticise God. Can we not see that in getting rid of the law we should not only get rid of the consequences of breaking the law, but of all the excellent consequences attending the keeping of it. We should also get rid of security and peace. There must be law. There can be no good without it. Existence itself springs from and continues, by conformity to law. Without law there would be chaos, confusion and every evil thing. Stability of law in the physical and moral, gives a basis for the peaceful development of rational well being.

Away from law there is nothing but chaos and death. It is therefore a madman's criticism to find fault with the introduction of law because it leads to sin. "The law entered that sin might abound"—not for the sake of sin but for the sake of what sin would give an opportunity of developing, for where sin abounded grace did much more abound. We cannot doubt that God foresaw as a consequence of introducing law first in Eden, then at Sinai, that all the world would become guilty before Him, and therefore utterly lost giving the opportunity for His kindness to come into play, with the result of drawing eternal gratitude and glory to Himself and conferring unspeakable and appreciated benefit on such as should be redeemed.

But does He show this kindness by hiding the law out of sight, and doing offenders good irrespective of its condemnation? By no means. This would have been worse than admitting man to life without law at all in the first place. God came to the rescue on the principle of upholding the law to the uttermost, and that by the Lord Jesus. He did what we could not do in our fleshly nature. He fulfilled the law and took it away. The Lord Jesus came for this purpose—"To do thy will, O God." Mere man could not do it. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh God hath done, sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Did not the Lord Jesus say, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil, and fulfil He did, to the letter. — And then what! He died for those who had failed, took upon Himself the curse which the law had imposed upon them. This God required at His hand, to lay down His life for His sheep. By this method only, under God's arrangement, could the sinning sheep live. The law was upheld — Christ died. Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God, and Christ was then raised and offered to sinners as a meeting point with God. Belief,

acceptance, and love of Him, submission and obedience to Him, are the conditions under which God is pleased to admit perishing sinners, into relationship with Himself. We look to the uplifted serpent and are saved from the serpent's bite. We believe in Him as God's appointed sacrifice for sin and as the fountain of every blessing covenanted in the promise to the fathers, and take upon us His name, and God extends forgiveness of past sins and promise of life through Christ in the Kingdom and age to come.

The law is upheld, yet it is all of grace, we could not claim such a glorious arrangement. We were condemned, and there is no room for boasting. Yet we are saved by obedience. The glorious result is achieved that God is magnified as the source of all the benefit, while sinners are justified by believing and with the answer of a good conscience and the joy of immortality, ascribe all the glory to God, for of Him and to Him, and through Him are all things.

But this point of glory could not have been reached without the law entering that sin might abound, "that where sin abounded grace might also much more abound."

We must remember that death has always been the punishment for disobedience to God's law, even before the law of Moses, even from the beginning. Paul when writing to the Romans confirms this when he says, in Romans 5:14 "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses" and highlighting this divine truth that God's law even before the time of Moses operated in Eden, as recorded in Genesis 2:16-17:-

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

but brings us back again to Romans 5:20:-

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.
But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;"

And Romans 1:21:-

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

“What is Truth?” (Part 13)

(John 18:38)

THE FLOOD

IN this age of unbelief, it is popular to refer to the Flood in a jocular manner. This overlooks that it was the greatest divine judgment this world has known. Of course some do admit there is incontrovertible evidence that there was a great flood, but then take away from its significance by asserting that it was somewhat localised to the Euphrates area where a great band of mud has been found at a low level of excavation. The scripture however leaves no doubt of the universality of the deluge.

“... the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.”
(Genesis 6:19).

This overthrow came because, as the scripture testifies, “... God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth ... And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth ... But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Surely there is a grave warning in that past great event and the Spirit’s record of it. Will the evil of the present age escape divine retribution, unlike that early time? Noah’s flood is not a subject for jocularly at all, especially in the light of the warning of Jesus Christ:-

“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”
(Matthew 24:38-39).

The judgment of God did not come at the time of Noah without warning — “... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” (1 Peter 3:20) For a hundred and twenty years Noah was preaching and warning his generation by that formidable object lesson, the great boat (the Ark) which he was building upon dry land. That only eight finally entered that saving structure reveals how contemptuous of the warning was mankind. Is the present generation any more heeding of the divine warning? It is not; as the scripture declares “... there

THE REMNANT

shall come in the last days scoffers ... saying, where is the promise of his coming? ... all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation ...; this they willingly are ignorant of ... the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." (2 Peter 3).

Men fulfil the prophecy in scientific illusion, or downright disregard, yet the evidence is there up in the Himalayas, the Rocky Mountains, the Alps and the Pyrenees where marine deposits of great thickness witness to the universal flood which would have ended all life for all time upon this good earth except for the Ark of God's provision, which preserved alive Noah and his family and the other creatures which found protection therein, until the waters of the great deluge subsided.



The Signs of His Coming and of the End of the World

“... They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.” (Isaiah 29:9).

The number of deaths and injuries from drug use (such as cocaine) in the United States and elsewhere is escalating; this comment is from known statistics, but of course there must be many more cases of drug suffering that is kept hidden. As the scripture prophesied, “... they stagger, but not with strong drink.” It is a great evil of these times and threatens to go on blighting increasingly the lives of men and women. Governments are alarmed, wondering how such a vicious slide in morality can be stemmed.

But there is also much spiritual drunkenness, undermining the peoples' regard for God's witness of the scriptures which alone has the moral force to prevent such wholesale drug abuse.

For example, one of the chief spokesmen for the English Church has said that miracles recorded in the Bible should be regarded as spiritually significant. This is another step in the so called modern trend which regards the Bible as a book which is allegorical, whether in relation to the creation or the record of later miraculous events.

It is now asserted that belief in such miracles as the virgin birth and the empty tomb without belief in what is signified by the record which describes such things, converts Christianity into cultic idolatry. That it is not right that belief should depend on the conviction that these physical miracles occurred. That the historical evidence for such things is meagre, therefore a man's faith should not depend on something so fragile as historical evidence.

Recently there has been a further assertion that the writers of the Gospels were more concerned with passing on their faith than getting their facts right; that the early Christians were not bothered about historic accuracy like modern people. That there is an element of truth in many of the stories of miracles, but they have been built up to be even more impressive. This philosophising of what is witnessed in the Word of God is a form of spiritual drunkenness, dulling mens' minds to the truth concerning God's great work in the world of men.

So in these times the nations become more and more bemused and dulled by detrimental things, actual and spiritual; no wonder the scripture which is so denigrated declares:-

“Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?”
(Isaiah 29:16).



News from the Ecclesias

EDEN, NEW YORK, Grange Hall, Church Street.

Sundays: Breaking of Bread 11.30 a.m.

Sunday School 1.45 p.m.

Bible Class: Midweek: Forestville and Hamburg.

Alternate Week: Revelation Study.

We are united with our Manchester brethren and sisters in the work of witnessing as advertising is planned, God willing, in local newspapers during July. May the efforts here and there be blessed as it is His will.

Gratitude is felt for guidance and help given in ecclesial affairs and also as individual brethren and sisters have been shown an outworking in particular questions and activities, as there has been a desire to do all in subjection to Him.

J.A.DeF.

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MANCHESTER, Ryecroft Hall, Audenshaw.

Sunday: Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.

Thursday: Bible Class 7.30 p.m.

We are in contact with the Editor of the “Old Paths” magazine from whom a promise has been received to answer a point which we have raised.